



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF TERRITORIES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

JUL 22 1969

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Hon. Edward E. Johnston
High Commissioner
Trust Territory of the
Pacific Islands
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Mr. Johnston:

This will be something of a pot-boiler on the subject of the Bikini resettlement program. It is prompted, in part, by the recent action of the House Appropriations Committee in recommending the full amount of your 1970 budget request, but also by the interest in the resettlement program from a number of members of the Congress and the public.

Enclosed for your ready reference is a copy of the 1970 budget justification for the Bikini project. Also enclosed is a copy of the "issue" paper which was presented to the Bureau of the Budget last fall by your predecessor and the Department, the paper which formed the basis for the \$1.7 million allowance in the 1970 budget.

I would say first, that you are committed only to the 1970 program and that, should conditions on the atoll dictate, you can, with Committee approval, modify that. The program was put together on the basis of a brief survey of the atoll last August and some informal consultation with the Bikini leadership. For that reason, we have attempted consistently to modify the program for 1971 and future years with terms such as "currently estimated" and "approximately." You may want to change it considerably in the months ahead.

Nonetheless, as soon as the 1970 funds are available to you, you should be prepared to move promptly to implement the first part of the resettlement project. This includes, of course, the start on construction of housing for the returning Bikinians, some basic community facilities, and, perhaps most important, a substantial start on the replanting project. I know that you have had a representative on the atoll during most, if not all, of the cleanup phase and that there have been some consultations with the Bikini people. However, we have no current information on your specific plans for the resettlement project as contrasted to the necessarily somewhat more general proposals of last fall and the Appropriation hearings.

REPOSITORY DOE/PASO
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BOX No. 1227; "EROA # 2"
BIKINI SURVEY (BIO-MED)
FOLDER July, 1969

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Because we do continually receive inquiries on this point, will you please let me have an outline as to how you propose to proceed with each of the several items included within the \$1.7 million budget request. The \$700,000 cleanup items are for reimbursement to DASA, but a time schedule for the remaining items would be most helpful. Perhaps such a schedule could best be expressed on the basis of the number of weeks (or months, if more appropriate) from the date funds become available. The exception would be the coconut replanting item where we have already authorized you to begin.

There are three major sensitive factors to be kept in mind. The first is to involve Bikinians in the planning for the reconstruction and replanting work. Second is the commitment to use Bikinians to the maximum possible extent in the rehabilitation work. Third is the commitment to create a "model" Pacific Island community. I know that the Bikinians rejected the "slant-leg" house model originally proposed, but have they agreed upon an alternative? Have they also been consulted and agreed to the location and design of the village facilities which are to be provided? If so, are there any sketches or photographs of models which can be provided us? An additional factor is the AEC Ad Hoc Committee report which contains a number of specific recommendations for the resettlement which were made to reduce the small radiation hazard. These recommendations should be closely followed.

Somewhat related to the consultation question, is the status of the atoll and the need by the Defense Department for one or two small sites for unmanned facilities. The original agreement from the Defense Department that the atoll could be returned to the Bikinians also included the requirement for one or two such sites. Defense sent a representative on the August 1969 visit to Bikini to make observations, if not actual determinations, with respect to this requirement. I mention it now because you should be specifically aware of the requirement and the Bikinians should also be aware of it. In the meantime, we have informally asked Defense to come to a final decision on the question as to number, location and acreage. We have urged that the sites be on islands where resettlement will not take place for some time to come.

Bikini is still under Defense Department jurisdiction. This is partially the rationale for the use of unbudgeted Defense and AEC funds to begin the cleanup in fiscal 1969. However, with the cleanup operation approaching completion, Defense is preparing formally to return the atoll, except for the sites in question, to the Trust Territory. We shall keep you informed on the progress of this action.

If I may turn to the question of publicity. DASA had planned to conduct two press tours to Bikini, but they were cancelled by the Defense Department. We understand that some thirty representatives of the "media" were made aware of the proposed press trips and the cancellation. Several, including -- we understand -- Hill Williams of the Seattle Times, representatives of the London Sunday Times, the Japan Television system, and the Australian Broadcasting system, are insistent upon making an early visit to Bikini. How DASA or Defense handles the problem is basically up to them, but as soon as responsibility passes to the Trust Territory, it will become yours.

Interior and the Trust Territory have consistently followed a policy of cooperation and assistance to the press and we see no reason why this policy should not be followed in the case of Bikini when it returns to your jurisdiction. On the other hand, you certainly have no facilities or funds to mount a press "tour" nor do we believe you need to attempt to do so. There will also be the practical problem of your accommodating any press people who arrive at Bikini and there is the further problem of their getting to Bikini. I believe the only practical course for you to follow is to welcome all comers from the press, within the limits of your physical facilities, on a first come first served basis. This was the procedure followed last August and it met with press approval. The press also paid its own way to, from, and at Bikini; also without objection. I believe you should expect them to do so in the future.

In any event, you will soon be presented with requests from the press and your Information Officer, Mr. Ashman, should be brought fully into the planning process so that he can handle any inquiries that come in. You may also want to have a "press" person on the atoll during the rehabilitation phase to help any press visitors. At the least, you may want to consider having Mr. Ashman accompany you on your August visit to Bikini with Admiral Mustin. Whoever serves as your press representative should also get a thorough briefing from the AEC on the radiation hazard -- or lack thereof. We will be glad to arrange for such a briefing. I think this is very important because of the rather great amount of misinformation being circulated publicly on this question. At the moment, I would commend to you the AEC report of the "ad hoc" committee which formed the basis for the AEC decision that Bikini radiation levels do not pose "a significant threat" to the returning people. You can expect a continuation of the high quality of assistance and cooperation of the AEC.

Lastly, I enclose some correspondence I have had with Congressman Lloyd Meeds. Mr. Meeds has a very great interest in Bikini and his constituent, Hill Williams, also has a great professional interest. I should appreciate your letting me have, as soon as possible, any comments you or your Bikini

representative may have on the comments passed on by Mr. Williams. May I also suggest that you make your own personal evaluation of the quality and quantity of work being done by DASA in the cleanup operation. I would greatly appreciate having your own evaluation, regardless of whether your comments should be passed outside the Department.

As I said at the outset, this is something of a pot-boiler, and I have a number of requests for information buried in it. If I may recapitulate them, I should appreciate having by August 11:

1. A statement from you with respect to the views of Bikinians (or when those views will be sought) on the design, etc., of housing and village facilities;
2. An estimate with respect to the employment plans for Bikinians;
3. A time-phased schedule for the several projects in the 1970 budget request;
4. Copies of any sketches or photographs of models for housing or village facilities for Bikini;
5. Your comments as to how you might handle press visits and your decision as to whether to station a press representative on the atoll or to designate someone to serve in such a capacity;
6. Whether your designee would prefer an AEC briefing on Saipan, Bikini, Honolulu, or elsewhere (we may have to make some compromises as to location of such a briefing); and
7. Your comments on the Meeds correspondence -- at the minimum based on your atoll representatives reports and, possibly, your own observations following your visit with Admiral Mustin.

For our part, we shall keep you advised of the progress of the Appropriations bill, Defense requirements for unmanned sites on Bikini, and any other developments affecting your plans or programs for Bikini.

Sincerely yours,

Elizabeth P. Farrington
Director

Enclosures